STEAMER DAY

HOW A LINER GETS AWAY FROM NEW YORK. THE CROWD AND THE HAPPENINGS.

BY E. W. TOWNSEND, AUTHOR OF CHIMMIE FADDEN.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

A great van, with cratelike sides, comes rattling down the pier heaped high with pale blue and gray striped sacks, and twenty porters trot after it, and begin dragging off the sacks the instant the van comes to a full stop. They pile the sacks in a big net, which, when filled, draws together at the four corners, and a spitting little engine on deck hauls it aboard ship. That is not the last, but the next to the last mail to be taken aboard the liner, and to me always marks the beginning of the actual preparation for departure; and whether I am a passenger, or only there to say "bon voyage," it never fails to set up a heart palpitation, and would continue to do so, I am convinced, were I to take out a life commutation ticket and pass the remainder of my days in leaving, crossing and arriving on a transatlantic passenger ship.

This is half an hour before noon, the sailing hour, and many passengers are already aboard, some have been aboard in an agony of impatience for hours, but this is the time when accustomed tourists begin to arrive, and also the men who are always all but too late whatever the occasion.

It is midwinter sailing, and we think, therefore, but few pasengers will be going, but the trip has now become a necessary part of so many people's business, or social affairs, or vagrant fancy, or moods or tenses, that to the ordinary observer the crowd we saw the other Wednesday seemed to have every characteristic of a midsummer sailing. The main companionway was just as nearly impassable with the same proportion of people who insisted upon going up or down by the left hand, instead of the right hand rail, and looked as serenely unconscious of being the cause of the exasperation they provoked; there were just as many people who would block up the passageway to the deck to take and deliver farewell embraces and messages; just as many baskets of flowers and boxes of candies set forth on the saloon dining tables; just as many women who tried to look surprised that they had so many baskets and boxes addressed to them, and just as many others who tried not to look surprised because they had none addressed to them, as on a sailing day in June. For my part I shared the emotions of those who did not find flowers and candies for them whatever their feelings were—surprise, regret or chagrin—for they were the nicest young women there; and any one could see that they were more deserving of such gifts, and would have enjoyed and appredated them more, than the women who had so many they became bored examining the cards accompanying.

For example, there was that eager brown-faced little New England young woman we knew at a glance was going to Paris to continue her art studies. It took no effort of the imagination to see her in the Fifty-seventh Street School in an all enveloping calico apron, much smudged with paint, where her unlawful caricatures of the master were such good work the master had to forgive her; to see her working after school hours and until the last gleam of north light failed in her hall bedroom, decorating menus, fete day cards or whatever, earning money, every cent of which she saved for this life dream trip. Her eyes sparkled with excitement; she was trembling with the joy of the hope realized; she looked so roguishly knowing, so alert, so jolly, so charmingly American, it was a shame no one had sent her a bunch of roses or a box of bonbons. On the other hand a blonded British soubrette, attended by a half dozen men, who were either very young and callow or very old and tough, who looked as if her good-by supper had lasted so long she had not had time to wash her face that morning, had so many bunches and baskets of flowers and boxes of candy she grew tired of hunting them up in the saloon and exclaimed: "My word! let's go out on deck. I'm feeling 'orribly stale and 'ave a bit of a 'eadache."

There was a troupe of other soubrettes—those who were on the stage, those who had been on the stage, and those who hoped to go on the stage—there to say goodby to her, and they made such a cackling, and asked each other so many times, "What would the captain say?" answering always with whistles, that the little art student whom no one was seeing off took a station on the promenade deck as far as she could away from them.

The crowd on the wharf and aboard ship suddenly withdrew its attention from the soubrette group and fixed it on a cab that came down the pier to the gangplank. On the box were a coachman and footman in the smartest liveries and great fur collars. The footman sprang to the cab door, took out some hand baggage, and then a tall, smooth-faced young man stepped out, and was instantly surrounded by thirty-six reporters, who all asked him questions at once, to which he made no other reply than a languid smile.

This young man interested me much, because he had recently been sentenced to a life of hard labor and brain-wearying responsibility. This sentence had been imposed through the judgment pronounced in a last will and testament, but the young man's keepers, and those upon whom devolved the task of seeing that the sentence was executed ,had agreed to give the unfortunate young man a year's grace, one year of liberty, before he took up the burden he could never again lay down.

He looked up at the great ocean liner as a prisoner might at an unlocked cell door, through which he could escape. It was to carry him on the first stage of his voyage to Cairo, where with other young men he would begin the sight seeing, the ratables, the fun with which he planned to fill in his last year of liberty. For one year, at least, he would not have to rack his tired brains over schemes and devices to acquire a shorter transcontinental route than had a rival; not have to bother about averting unfriendly legislation—municipal, State, national—not have to deny himself the commonest recourse of friendship for fear of giving his enemies the advantages of a spy; nor have to abandon clubs, sports, fads, music, art, literature, leisure, travel, in favor of the hard labor to which he had been sentenced. Oh, happy one year of freedom!

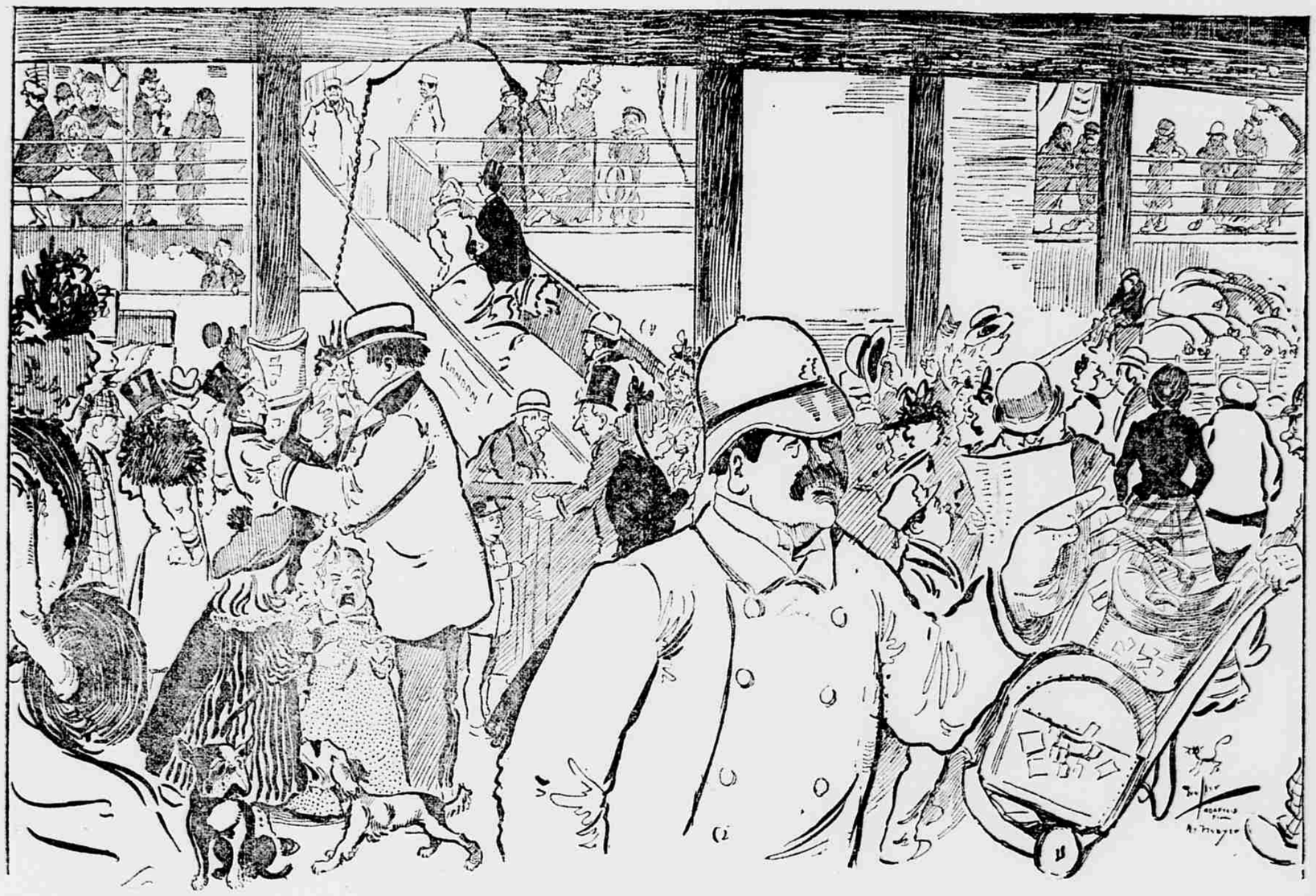
His valet followed him out of the cab and took his master's hand baggage from the footman, and the unfortunate young man walked up the gangplank and to his suite of staterooms, heavy with the perfume of rich banks of flowers, and the bright-eyed little art student, who had seen him, looked as if she pitied him. And even she should!

There goes the gong!

"Visitors all ashore, please! All ashore who are not passengers!"

That is a command of parting that causes many a smiling lip to quiver and many eyes to fill. A woman on deck suddenly stoops to a child, a girl of 10 or 12 years, wraps her in an embrace, and weeps. Then a man who has begun to blink suspiciously embraces the child, won, seeing her father's eyes wet for the first time, perhaps, begins to sob as if her heart were breaking.

A man standing by the child's side says: "Oh, come, now! Why, we are going to have a fine time crossing." But mother and father continue to embrace the little girl, until they are all completely unnerved,



"The Liner she's a lady by the paint upon her face,
An' if she meets an accident, they call it sore disgrace."—Kipling.

and a deck steward has to warn the parents that they've little time for going ashore. The story is easy to learn. Uncle going to Europe on business and is taking child over to put her in school in Paris. The parents are on the pier now, still weeping, but the child is seen at the rail laughing at something her uncle points out.

It is funny, too—I mean what the uncle points out, not that the child is so soon laughing, while her father and mother stand there praying for her safety, with tears running down their cheeks.

He has pointed out the arrival of the last supplemental mail wagon. It, too, is heaped high with bags of letters—there must be thousands of letters there—and before the great van comes to a stop porters begin snatching off the bags, shouldering them, and trotting up the gangplank. They make two streams, one running up with loads, another running down for more bags, and ship's officers urge them on as if the writers of all those letters were there demanding that there should be no delay. And what can they all be about, those letters? And what have so many thousands of letter writers to say to so many thousands of people in Europe that could not have been said and written and posted the day before? Well, I hope that all the remittance men and women in London, Paris and Berlin who expect drafts or checks from home are remembered in those countless sacks of mail. That would be worth holding the ship for. But nothing will do that.

"Stand by!" shouts an officer, and some sailors let go the lines that make fast the gangplank to the ship.

"Stand by!" again shouts a pier official, and a score of men grasp the gangplank to guide it when the engine shall lift it free from the ship's deck. There is a rattle and a roar at the upper end of the long pier, and a cab comes down with the steaming horse on a run. It is the inevitable late man. Every one looks to see what he will be like when he emerges. We naturally expect to see him blown and steaming, like the horse, and there is a giggle as a policeman opens the cab door, and a man dressed as for an avenue parade steps out coolly, hands the grinning driver a bill, and leisurely walks up the already swinging gangplank, while a half dozen ship stewards hustle his baggage up after him.

"Heave off!"

The big plank comes down by the run, the ship's hoarse whistle gives forth a long blast of farewell, and at the same instant the great black hulk slowly begins to move out toward the stream.

Every one has said good-by to every one else a hundred times before now; last words have been exchanged, cautions, remembrances and messages spoken a score of times, but it must all be done over again in the greatest excitement, as the crowd on the pier moves along slowly with the ship, each person on the pier trying to keep opposite his or her friend on the deck.

At the rail of the main deck, below where the passengers stand, is a row of men in shirtsleeves, generally bareheaded, in spite of the chill blasts, and each with a worn, torn towel hanging loosely over his neck. They are the stokers, preparing for their turn below in the furnace-room, and as we remember that those towels are to keep the perspiration from blinding them as they work, the thought of how warm they soon will be deprives them of the advantage of our sympathies, as we shiver and shake ourselves out to the exposed end of the pier. One stoker has come aboard ship fortified most plentifully, it appears, against the danger of being dried out internally by the stokehold heat, for he is moistened within by water-front grog to a pitch of universal good will. He kisses his hand to the pretty girls on the pier, tells the smart young men not to weep over their sweethearts, for whose welfare he promises a fatherly care, shouts his forgiveness to the policeman, and at last lifts up a mighty voice and bellows, "God bless everybody!" and suddenly disappears from sight as the third mate knocks his feet from under him and casually kicks him into silence.

Slowly, with cautious consciousness of the danger of intruding her mighty bulk into the busy traffic of the North River, the noble craft moves out clear of the pier, and then suddenly loses every aspect of dignity, for, the tide setting in, a half dozen puffing, gurgling, steaming, snorting, sizzling, assertive little tugs impudently butt their rope bound noses at her, charge at her, buck and pounce down on her again in a most familiar and inconsiderate manner; all this being designed to push her bow down toward the Statue of Liberty, whereas by the tide's force her bow was made to display a desire to head up for Grant's Tomb.

She turns very slowly under the persuasion of the puffy little storming party, and this gives all another chance to say all their good-bys over again, the condemned young man saying his by proxy, his valet waving a dignified farewell to his footman.

Only the art student has no one to say good-by to, so she takes out a little silk American flag and waves it in farewell to the whole American Continent, looking a little sad as she did so, too.

EDWARD W. TOWNSEND.

WAS AUTO-SUGGESTION RESPONSIBLE FOR SUICIDE?

Bertha Lane Mellish, Like the Heroine of Whom She Wrote, Leaped to Death.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

Can suicide be brought about by hypnotism" is the question just now agitating the medical profession and kindred scientists.

The case which has set them to debating this gruesome subject is the explanation given by Doctor H. L. Hammond of the strange suicide of Bertha Lane Mellish three years ago.

Doctor Hammond says that Miss Mellish hypnotized herself into committing suicide and that the self-suggestion came through the book she had written, in which the heroine committed this deed.

Interest in the self-destruction of Miss Mellish has never abated at Mount Holyoke College, where she was a member of the senior class. The pupils of that school of learning in the classic Connecticut town speak of it in whispers to-day and wonder what impelled this girl to flee from their midst to destroy her life. Miss Mellish had everything in the world to endear existence on earth—doting parents, means to gratify her slightest wish and beauty that promised to make her a charming woman. She was talented, and her pen portrayed fluently what she wished to convey in essay or story. A novelette, in which the heroine committed suicide by hurling herself from a cliff into the river, was the last of her literary efforts. It is this novelette, Doctor Hammond says, which caused her death. It suggested to her death in the same manner in which the creature of her fancy had found it.

It happened on November 18, 1897, Founders' Day, which was celebrated at Holyoke with graduation exercises. Just about dusk Miss Mellish had gone to a high cliff overlooking the Connecticut River to work out the graduation thesis, it was thought by those who looked on. From this cliff she leaped into the river.

Doctor Hammond's belief is that while there amidst the growing darkness she became so impressed with the similarity of the scene, that the fiction she had created became to her a reality; that she suffered in her own heart the despair of the lovelorn girl she had portrayed, and sought to end her anguish, as she had fixed in her mind to end the struggles of her book heroine.

When last seen Miss Mellish was running along a high cliff overlooking the river. Her movements became wild, and at last she cast herself over the precipice.

The spot from where she took the leap into eternity was a favorite one with her. She had gone there often to study or spend recreation hours in idle dreams.

Her absence was not noticed until the next day, owing to the constant stream of visitors at the college. An "Engaged" card was left hanging on the door of her room, and it is believed she had forgotten to remove it. When her disappearance was discovered a searching party started out to find her. Her footprints were plainly to be seen on the cliff. She had been seen there running about and gesticulating on the previous evening, and her fate was ascertained without trouble.

The novelette which Miss Mellish wrote bore this title:

LA PETITE.

A Story of

MATTAWANGAN MILL.

By

BERTHA LANE MELLISH.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

"La Petite" was the heroine of the young girl's fancy. "French Joe" took her to a cottage over the hill. There he mistreated her. She learned too late that he had deceived her. The tragedy that encompassed La Petite is told by a girl at the mill, who tries to save her from despair. In her own words, Miss Mellish describes La Petite's suicide:

"Down a hill we ran, across a stream at its foot and up a slight incline through a narrow belt of hemlock trees that skirted the foot hills of Mount Holly. Then there were rough wood cutters' paths winding among broken ledges and boulders.

"On she went, ever the same undiminishable distance before me. The paths stopped. Sure she could not, would not go further. In despair I called to her. She paid no heed, lightly scaling the scarred faces of the crags.

"But I knew the mountain better than Marie, and I saw the way she went, straight as death to the river on the other side. Near the spot where I stopped a deep gorge cleft the heart of the mountain and down it flowed a little stream. I ran with all my might up the stream's bed, climbed the precipice at its head and reached the west summit to find Marie skimming along the ledge that walled it before me. Unless that strange endurance should fail, there was hardly a hope of catching her now.

"Without a glance back, always looking for a bush or a tree to cling to, now sitting and sliding with the sliding stones, now staying the doubtful support of some dead branch by a yet more doubtful foothold, every moment escaping a danger which seemed unescapable, she reached the belt of trees that clothed the steep base of the mountain just above the river and disappeared in them.

"She would hear no sound and know that no one followed her over the rocks. The time was endless, yet unrealizable.

"Suddenly I heard the sound which warned me that the river had its own. Then I flung myself down those rocks, lost my hold and fell.

"They found us both that night—Marie at rest, it seemed with none of the death agony in her still face—we were bruised, half covered with a mass of small stones at the foot of a low cliff."

STORIES OF STAGE LIFE TOLD BY PLAYER FOLK.

John Sparks's Solo Orchestra at Rehearsal in Lowell, Mass.—Two Chapters From the Experiences of J. E. Dodson—How May Irwin Did Not Walk Upstairs—Advertising of Guerrero, the Spanish Dancer—Incident of an Eames Recital at a Church Festival.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

John Sparks, the Irish comedian of the Rogers Brothers company, tells this story of musical values as measured by one New England standard.

When the company played at Lowell, Mass., a rehearsal was called for 6:30 p. m., as is the custom in one night stands in that section of the country, because many of the musicians hold day jobs in other vocations.

Mr. Sparks was the first to arrive at the theater. He had a new song he wanted to rehearse before the company's leader arrived to conduct the music of the show. There was only one occupant in the narrow space assigned to the musicians. He was a cornetist. After waiting some little time, Mr. Sparks asked this chap where the rest of the orchestra was. He said they were playing at a country club for an early evening dance.

"Well, how comes it you are here?" asked Sparks.

"They sent me here," said the cornetist, "because I couldn't play good enough for the dance."

J. E. Dodson, who first came to this country with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, and who has remained here ever since, playing last week in "Because She Loved Him So," at the Olympic, tells of his early experience in stageland, which happened, of course, in England. He tells of an occasion on which he played Melton Math in "The Ticket-of-Leave-Man." It is assigned to this character at a certain point in the second act to retire out of sight in a trap under the stage. When it came to his cue, Mr. Dodson slid gracefully out of sight, but unfortunately pulled the cover of the trap behind him, locking it tight. He called and called to the people on the stage, who were looking for him, but they failed to hear him, and as there was no substitute, the play had to go on without him. At the finish, some one recollected the trap, and the door opened, and if there ever was a scared and confused actor, Dodson was the one.

At one time, Mr. Dodson was traveling through the English provinces, giving elocutionary exhibitions. "The Uncle," which Henry Irving sometimes gives, was one of his recitals. It is a tale of murder, told by the murderer's nephew. In the last stanza the nephew is supposed to cry out something about his uncle, taking three steps backward and looking with terror on his prostrate victim. While speaking these lines, Mr. Dodson was accustomed to take the three backward steps. On this particular occasion he did so, and stepped on a part of the stage where the wood was pretty rotten, so that he was precipitated into the regions below. Swiftly climbing up one of the broken pieces of timber, he reached the firm part of the stage, and finished his recitation. The audience gave him a rousing encore, the best, he declared, he ever received.

May Irwin, the plump and tall soubrette, was in a tight place not long ago on a certain Monday at Waterbury, Conn. Elevators in certain Connecticut hotels do not run after 11 o'clock at night. When Miss Irwin returned from the playhouse she touched the button, but the lift did not move.

"Very sorry, madam, but the elevator is not running," said the clerk, after Miss Irwin had made a dozen ineffectual attempts to notify somebody that she wanted to ascend.

"Well, you will have to start it up," said Miss Irwin angrily. "I would not walk upstairs for a prize cake."

The clerk said that the engineer had gone home and banked the fires.

"I will never walk. You'll have to carry me first," retorted Miss Irwin.

"Beg pardon, but we do not give 'Sapho' shows here," testily replied the clerk.

The dumbwaiter had also shut down, and Miss Irwin was told that there was absolutely nothing doing in the lift line.

"Well, we will see. Just make out my bill," insisted Miss Irwin.

The actress paid her bill and went to another hotel, where a generous tip to the elevator boy saved her from the inconvenience of walking upstairs.

Guerrero, the famously beautiful Spanish dancer, who is creating a commotion in Paris just now, spied a well-dressed couple in the audience chattering one night. She stopped and eyed the culprits severely, and when their talk ceased she resumed her performance, only to stop again a few minutes later to ask the lady and gentleman to withdraw.

"I protest against being thus impertinently addressed from the stage," said the man indignantly. "We paid to come here, and if this special number of the performance doesn't interest us we claim the privilege of conversing, provided it doesn't disturb our neighbors.

Guerrero cried out: "Manager, see that the money is returned to these ill-bred people, and get them out."

The couple burst out simultaneously at this, calling Guerrero names.

At this the dancer jumped over the footlights, scrambling madly over the orchestra seats until she reached the couple, and the three made a "rough house" generally in that part of the auditorium. The trio were arrested. The dancer fought the policeman, and her magnificent scarlet costume was completely torn to shreds.

At the station the dancer pleaded that the fight was part of the show, she having arranged it with her aid-de-camps, the talking couple, for advertising purposes. The Magistrate let her off only after imposing a heavy fine and advised her to "cut" that part of her business from her performance.

When Mme. Eames was making a Western tour recently she consented to sing at a church festival of the Cathedral of a certain city. The church authorities decided to charge an admission fee to the Cathedral to all who wished to hear the great singer. Most people paid willingly, but one crank demanded admission on the ground that he should not be charged for going into a public place of worship.

"Do you mean to tell me," he argued with the doorkeeper, "that I shall require a ticket to enter the kingdom of heaven?"

"Well, no," replied the ticket-seller, "but then you won't hear Mme. Eames in heaven."

Then, when the enormity of the remark dawned upon him, the ticket-seller turned and fled.

LAFAYETTE DOLLARS.

From the Youth's Companion.

IT will be recalled that an American monument to the Marquis de Lafayette is to be erected in the city of Paris by the aid of subscriptions raised by the school children of the United States. By an act of the last Congress, the United States mint was authorized to strike off 50,000 silver dollars with a special design commemorating the setting up of this monument, and to turn the coins over to the association which has in charge the erection of the monument in Paris.

By this association the dollars will be sold for $2 apiece. The sum of $100,000 thus realized will be added to the fund for the monument.

On December 27, 1899, the Director of the Mint, Mr. Roberts, presented to President McKinley the first of these dollars which came from the mint, and Mr. McKinley announced his intention of presenting it in turn to the President of the French Republic, M. Loubet. This, in fact, was done on the third of March.

On one side of the coin are the heads of Washington and Lafayette, and on the other is a reproduction of the proposed monument. Across the face of the monument is this inscription:

"Erected in the Name of the School Children of the United States, Paris, 1900."